yesterday

St. Stephen's, one of the early churches

by Francis E. Hughes

Services of the Episcopal Church in Terre Haute were first held in 1839 when Mrs. ~~Thomas~~ Richard E. Blake, Mrs. W. F. Krumbhaar and Mrs. D. S. Donaldson called on Bishop Jackson Kemper, who was staying at the Prairie House, and asked him to stay over and conduct services for Episcopalians in the community.

These services were held at the home of Mrs. Blake.

Bishop Kemper sent the Rev. Charles Pindle, missionary of the Protestant Episcopal Church, here in November of that year to serve the congregation and services were held then either in the lower room of the James Johnston Building, southeast corner of the Public Square; in the Court House or in the Town Hall.

On April 15, 1840, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church was organized. Colonel Blake was elected senior warden, Krumbhaar, junior warden, and Dr. E. Daniels, Levi Warren, Jacob Bourne and John Rutledge, vestrymen.

In September of 1842, the Reverend Pindle was succeeded by the Rev. Robert B. Cross, who served the church until 1850. In his first year, the Reverend Cross traveled for several months and in the ensuing four years for several weeks at a time, collecting money to build a church here.

The cornerstone of the first small church, on the west side of North Fifth Street between Cherry Street and Wabash Avenue, just north of the alley, was laid Sunday, June 1, 1845. On that date, the evening services were held in Town Hall, with the Rev. Andrew Wylie preaching. The congregation then went to the new church where the Reverend Cross gave an appropriate service and Dr. Wylie delivered the address.

On Thursday, Oct. 2, 1845, the Right Reverend Kemper, bishop of Missouri, consecrated the church and the Rev. M. Killikelly, missionary at Vincennes, preached.

Tindel A. Madison was architect for the church and Zenas Smith executed the masonry.

In later years, this original church became a little theater where the Germans of the city had entertainments. Following that, it became the Adelphia Theater.

The Reverend Cross resigned the rectorship March 3, 1850, and was succeeded by the Rev. Charles P. Clark, who came here Jan. 15, 1851. He resigned March 6, 1852.

On Nov. 22, 1844, the Rev. Samuel Roosevelt Johnson of Lafayette deeded to the local church one-third of a lot between Crawford and Deming streets from Seventh Street almost to Ninth Street for $1.00. This was made into lots that were sold between 1861 and 1863.

Also, in 1847, the Rev. Philip E. Milledoler gave the church 20 acres of land south of Seelyville, which were also sold later.

After coming here to serve the church as rector Dec. 12, 1852, the Rev. D. D. Antwerp remained for three years. In August of 1855, the Rev. W. G. Spencer came here. He stayed for six years and was replaced by the Rev. Chauncey Fitch.

While the Reverend Spencer was rector, the church bought two lots at the southeast corner of Seventh and Eagle streets on which to build a new church. The property at 215 North Seventh Street was purchased from Chauncey Rose for $1,115, and adjoining property on which a rectory was to be built was bought from Charles Wood for $900 in 1859.

The Reverend Fitch, successor to the Reverend Spencer, had plans drawn for the new church by the architect, W. R. Parsons. The Rt. Rev. George Upfold, bishop of the diocese, conducted the services at the laying of the cornerstone of the church on May 4, 1862. First services in the new church were held March 5, 1863.

The new church cost $12,000, and in 1871, a new organ was purchased for it at a cost of $2,500, plus the trade-in of the old melodian. It was then that the tower also was built for $2,000.

The Reverend Fitch resigned Sept. 4, 1863, to accept a chaplaincy in the United States Army, and the Rev. Thomas Mills Martin was then rector until 1869. The next rector was the Rev. Thomas R. Austin, who served from August, 1870, to November, 1871.

For four months in 1872, the Rev. Spruille Burford served the church as rector, after which the Rev. Francis N. Dunham came here in 1880.

J. A. Vrydagh was the architect for the rectory built on the lot adjoining the church in 1884. A bell for the church also was purchased that year from contributions. At that time, the Rev. Walter Delafield was rector. He resigned in June of 1886, and was succeeded by the Rev. James D. Stanley.

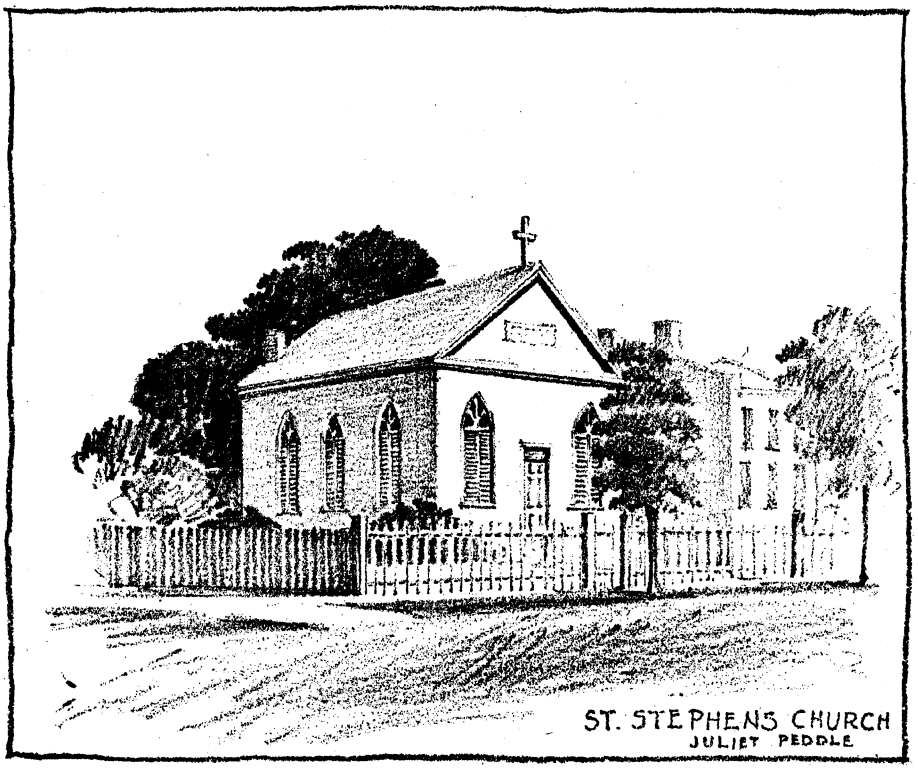
In 1886, St. Luke's Mission was built at Gilbert and College avenues, and St. John's Mission on Sycamore Street flourished for awhile.

The cornerstone of the Parish House was laid in 1891. When the Rev. Stanley resigned April 8, 1896, he was succeeded the following Aug. 5 by the Rev. John E. Sulger, who served the church for 33 years until his death in 1929.

During that time, the church was rebuilt with a Bedford stone veneer, a new organ was installed, walls and ceilings frescoed and a new heating system installed. Also, two new missions, one at the northwest corner of Thirteenth and Linden streets, and the other, St. George's, on Ferguson Hill, were started.

The Reverend Sulger was succeeded by the Rev. Charles S. Heckingbottam and Robert C. Alexander, deacon, who conducted services for awhile until the Rev. Charles Noyes Tyndall came as rector for a year. He was followed by the Rev. William T. Capers, who stayed for four years.

In 1947, the Rev. Thomas Mabley came to be rector and stayed here for 20 years. When he resigned in 1967, the congrega-



tion gave him $100 for each year he had been rector here.

It was in 1956, during the time the Reverend Mabley was here, that the old rectory was torn down and a new building housing a chapel, lounge, library and dual-purpose rooms was erected on the site. It conformed to the 13th Century English Parish Church architecture of the church. Architects were McGuire and Shook of Indianapolis with Miller, Vrydagh and Miller of Terre Haute. This building was dedicated Jan. 1, 1957.

In 1958, a landscaped court between these two buildings was added. It resembles an English formal garden.

The Rev. Harold Taylor succeeded the Reverend Mabley after a few years. In 1961, during the time he was rector, the entire interior of the church was renovated and redecorated. At the same time, the Parish Hall at the rear of the church was also renovated.

Several years ago, the church was air-conditioned.

The present rector of the church is the Rev. Joseph A. Rickards Jr., who came to St. Stephen's Church in 1972.

ANIMAL POISONING

A $500.00 reward is offered by the American Humane Association for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person or persons willfully poisoning or feeding ground glass to any animal, according to the Terre Haute Humane Society Shelter Director, Robert May. Persons should contact Mr. May if eligible for the reward.

The recently organized League of Volunteers of the Society is taking an aggressive approach to the problem of cruelty thru the LOV (League of Volunteers) Humane Education and Legislation Committee.

Involving children in positive and compassionate ways with animals, learning to enjoy them and consider their needs is being given priority by the Education Committee, according to the Chairperson, Mrs. Earl Shaker. Additional people, both men and women of all ages, are needed to help promote kindness and prevent the sadistic cruelty recently experienced in our Community, said Mrs. Shaker.

LOV meets the last Sunday afternoon of each month in the education room at the animal shelter and an excellent group of enthused people have already become involved. Additional information may be received by calling 232-0293, Mr. May or 299-5532, Mrs. Earl Shaker.

Volunteers may serve in many ways at their own convenience.

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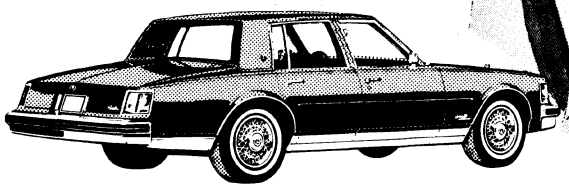

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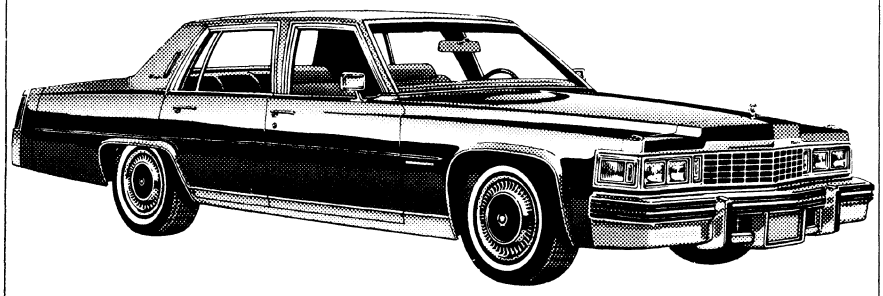

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